

Message Text

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46

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO USIA WASHDC

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4872

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 1819

USIAC

ACTION FOR VOA NEWS ANALYSIS DIVISION WASHDC

INFO FOR USIA IEA

SECSTATE FOR S/PRS AND EA/P

CINCPAC FOR USIA ADVISOR

SUBJECT: N.V. A. PROVIDES SAPPER GROUP FOR KHMER COMMUNIST
OFFENSIVE

1. ACCORDING TO INFORMED WESTERN SOURCES IN PHNOM PENH,
THE KHMER COMMUNIST CENTRAL PARTY COMMITTEE (KCCPC)
IN EARLY OCTOBER 1973, FORMALLY REQUESTED THE CENTRAL
OFFICE FOR SOUTH VIETNAM (COSVN) TO SEND THE 9TH NORTH
VIETNAMESE ARMY (NVA) DIVISION BACK INTO THE KHMER
REPUBLIC TO HELP THE KHMER COMMUNISTS (KC) RESUME THEIR
SEIGE OF PHNOM PENH.

2. INCREASINGLY HOSTILE RELATIONS BETWEEN KC AND
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VIET CONG (VC)/NVA UNITS WERE CAUSING AN UNFAVORABLE

SITUATION FOR THE VC IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC. COSVN THEREFORE DECIDED THAT THE REQUEST PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESSURE THE KCCPC FOR CERTAIN CONCESSIONS, SUCH AS RICE PURCHASING AND TRAVEL PRIVILEGES ,AND BASE CAMP SANCTUARIES IN THE REPUBLIC. COSVN NOTIFIED THE KCCPC THAT THE 9TH NVA DIVISION COULD NOT BE SENT BACK SINCE IT WAS ALREADY COMMITTED TO OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM (SVN), BUT COSVN WOULD MAKE THE 367TH SAPPER GROUP AVAILABLE TO ASSIST THE KC.

3. COSVN LEADERS WERE CONVINCED THAT THE KC COULD NOT DEFEAT THE KHMER NATIONAL ARMED FORCES (FANK) WITHOUT COMBAT SUPPORT FROM FC/NVA UNITS. COSVN LEADERS WERE ALSO DISGUSTED WITH THE "WHIMSICAL POLICY MAKERS" OF THE KCCPC. FOR EXAMPLE, IN JANUARY 1973 THE KCCPC SENT A NOTE TO COSVN DEMANDING THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL VC/NVA UNITS AND ORGANIZATIONS FROM CAMBODIA. AT THE SAME TME,THE KCCPC INITIATED NATIONWIDE ANTI-VC/NVA DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SIEGE OF PHNOM PENH, THE ANTI-VC/ NVA DEMONSTRATIONS HAD GAINED SUCH MOMENTUM AND THE TURMOIL WAS SO GREAT THAT COSVN WAS OBLIGED TO WITHDRAW MOST OF ITS MILITARY UNITS TO SVN. THE 367TH SAPPER GROUP, WHICH SPEAR-HEADED THE ATTACKS ON PHNOM PENH, WITHDREW TO TAY NINH PROVINCE, SVN. OTHER NVA/VC UNITS THAT HAD ATTACKED THE CAMBODIAN PROVINCIAL CAPITALS OF KOMPONG CHAM, PREY VENG AND SVAY RIENG ALSO RETURNED TO THE BORDER AREA OR TO SOUTH VIETNAM. AS TTHESE UNITS WITHDREW, KC ATTACKS AGAINST PHNOM PENH AND VARIOUS PROVINCIAL CAPITALS SUBSIDED, AND FANK UNITS WERE ABLE TO PUSH BACK THE KC AND EXPAND THEIR DEFENSIVE PERIMETERS.

5. COSVN CONSIDERED CAMBODIA AS AN IMPORTANT REAR BASE THAT IT COULD NOT AFFORD TO LOSE. THE KCCPC,FOR ITS PART, CAME TO REALIZE THAT IT COULD NOT WIN A DECISIVE MILITARY VICTORY WITHOUT VC/NVA MILITARY SUPPORT. THE TWO SIDES THEREFORE OCCASIONALLY MET TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES. AT ONE SUCH MEETING THE KCCPC RETRACTED ITS DEMANDS FOR A TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF VC/NVA UNITS AND UNCLASSIFIED

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ORGANIZATIONS FROM CAMBODIA. COSVN PROMISED LATER THAT IT WOULD RETURN CERTAIN COMBAT UNITS, SUCH AS THE 367TH SAPPER GROUP AND THE D-15 RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION, TO OPERATE ALONG THE CORRIDOR FROM SUBURBAN PHNOM PENH TO THE BORDER OF KIEN GIANG PROVINCE, SVN.

6. THE MAJOR CAUSES OF THE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE VC/NVA AND THE KC WERE:

A. THE HAUGHTY, CONDESCENDING ATTITUDE OF THE
VC/NVA TOWARD THE KC.

B. THE INFLATIONARY TREND CAUSED BY MASSIVE
VC/NVA RICE AND FOOD PURCHASES IN CAMBODIA.
(THE KC REFUSED TO SELL RICE TO THE VC, SO THE
VC ESTABLISHED A BLACK MARKET WHERE THEY PAID RELATIVELY
HIGH PRICES FOR THEIR FOOD PROVISIONS).

C. THE KCCPC DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE VC/NVA PRESENCE IN
CAMBODIA AND DISTRUST OF VC/NVA INTENTIONS IN CAMBODIA.
THIS AROSE BECAUSE COSVN HAD DONE LITTLE TO "LIBERATE" CAM-
BODIA EXCEPT THAT WHICH SERVED COSVN INTERESTS BEFORE 1970
THE KC HAD APPROACHED COSVN LEADERS FOR ASSISTANCE TO
START A "WAR OF LIBERATION" AGAINST PRINCE SIHANOUK, BUT COSVN
HAD DECLINED. AFTER SIHANOUK HAD BEEN OUSTED, COSVN CONDUCTED
A UNILATERAL EFFORT TO REBUILD SIHANOUK'S IMAGE THROUGHOUT THE
CAMBODIAN COUNTRYSIDE.

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